

# BULLYING PREVENTION POLICY



## Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy, please contact the school office.

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## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

- explain the definition of bullying
- make clear that all forms of bullying at Richmond West Primary School will not be tolerated
- ask that everyone in our school community be alert to signs and evidence of bullying behaviour, and accept responsibility to report bullying behaviour to school staff
- ensure that all reported incidents of bullying are appropriately investigated and addressed
- ensure that support is provided to students who may be affected by bullying behaviour (including victims, bystanders and perpetrators)
- seek parental and peer group support in addressing and preventing bullying behaviour at Richmond West Primary School

When responding to bullying behaviour, Richmond West Primary School aims to:

- be proportionate, consistent and responsive
- find a constructive solution for everyone
- stop the bullying from happening again
- restore the relationships between the students involved.

Richmond West Primary School acknowledges that school staff owe a duty of care to students to take reasonable steps to reduce the risk of reasonably foreseeable harm, which can include harm that may be caused by bullying behaviour.

## SCOPE

This policy addresses how Richmond West Primary School aims to prevent, address and respond to student bullying behaviour. Richmond West Primary School recognises that there are many other types of inappropriate student behaviours that do not meet the definition of bullying which are also unacceptable at our school. These other inappropriate behaviours will be managed in accordance with our *Engagement and Wellbeing Policy*, *Duty of Care Policy*, *Yard Duty and Supervision Policy* and *Statement of Values and School Philosophy*. Bullying complaints will be taken seriously and responded to sensitively at our school.

This policy applies to all school activities, including camps and excursions.

## DEFINITIONS

### Bullying

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*Bullying* is repeated verbal, physical, social or psychological aggressive behaviour by a person or group directed towards a less powerful person or group that is intended to cause harm, distress or fear. In 2018 the Education Council of the Council of Australian Governments endorsed the following definition of bullying for use by all Australian schools:

*Bullying is an ongoing and deliberate misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behaviour that intends to cause physical, social and/or psychological harm. It can involve an individual or a group misusing their power, or perceived power, over one or more persons who feel unable to stop it from happening.*

*Bullying can happen in person or online, via various digital platforms and devices and it can be obvious (overt) or hidden (covert). Bullying behaviour is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time (for example, through sharing of digital records)*

*Bullying of any form or for any reason can have immediate, medium and long-term effects on those involved, including bystanders. Single incidents and conflict or fights between equals, whether in person or online, are not defined as bullying.*

Bullying has three main features:

- It involves a misuse of power in a relationship
- It is ongoing and repeated, and
- It involves behaviours that can cause harm.

Bullying can be:

1. *direct* physical bullying – e.g. hitting, tripping, and pushing or damaging property.
2. *direct* verbal bullying – e.g. name calling, insults, homophobic or racist remarks, verbal abuse.
3. *indirect* bullying – e.g. spreading rumours, playing nasty jokes to embarrass and humiliate, mimicking, encouraging others to socially exclude a person and/or damaging a person's social reputation or social acceptance.

*Cyberbullying* is direct or indirect bullying behaviours using digital technology. For example, via a mobile device, computers, chat rooms, email, social media, etc. It can be verbal, written and include images, video and/or audio.

## Other distressing and inappropriate behaviours

Many distressing and inappropriate behaviours may not constitute bullying even though they are unpleasant. Students who are involved in or who witness any distressing and inappropriate behaviours should report their concerns to school staff and our school will follow the Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy and Child Safe Code of Conduct.

*Mutual conflict* involves an argument or disagreement between people with no imbalance of power. In incidents of mutual conflict, generally, both parties are upset and usually both want a resolution to the issue. Unresolved mutual conflict can develop into bullying if one of the parties targets the other repeatedly in retaliation.

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*Social rejection or dislike* is not bullying unless it involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others.

*Single-episode acts* of nastiness or physical aggression are not the same as bullying. However, single episodes of nastiness or physical aggression are not acceptable behaviours at our school and may have serious consequences for students engaging in this behaviour. Richmond West Primary School will use its Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy to guide a response to single episodes of nastiness or physical aggression.

*Harassment* is language or actions that are demeaning, offensive or intimidating to a person. It can take many forms, including sexual harassment and disability harassment. Further information about these two forms of harassment, including definitions, is set out in our *Inclusion and Diversity Policy*. Harassment of any kind will not be tolerated at Richmond West Primary School and may have serious consequences for students engaging in this behaviour. Richmond West Primary School will use its *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy* to guide a response to students demonstrating harassing behaviour, unless the behaviour also constitutes bullying, in which case the behaviour will be managed in accordance with this Bullying Prevention Policy.

## POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

Richmond West Primary School is committed to providing a safe and respectful learning environment where bullying will not be tolerated.

### Bullying Prevention

When responding to bullying behaviour, Richmond West Primary School aims to:

- To create a culture of inclusion;
- To reinforce within the school community what bullying is, and the fact that it is unacceptable;
- To articulate the signs and evidence of bullying and to ensure bullying is reported whether a person is an observer or a victim;
- To ensure that all reported incidents of bullying are responded to consistently and effectively;
- To seek parental and peer-group support and co-operation at all times;
- be proportionate, consistent and responsive;
- find a constructive and positive solution for everyone;
- stop the bullying from happening again;
- restore the relationships between the students involved.

Richmond West Primary School has a number of programs and strategies in place to build a positive and inclusive school culture. We strive to foster a school culture that prevents bullying behaviour by modelling and encouraging behaviour that demonstrates acceptance, kindness and respect.

Bullying prevention at Richmond West Primary School is proactive and is supported by research that indicates that a whole school, multifaceted approach is the most effective way to prevent and address bullying.

The Richmond West Primary School *Student Engagement and Wellbeing Policy* outlines our School Wide Positive Behaviour Supports (SWPBS) Friendly Schools (FS) and Respectful Relationships (RR)

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framework that explicitly defines, teaches and reinforces positive behaviours at Richmond West Primary School. The SWPBS data collection system allows for the identification of patterns of bullying in the school.

Positive behaviours are reinforced through Richmond West Primary School's SWPBS, FS and RR acknowledgement systems. Strategies that promote student resilience are also explicitly taught through the RR program.

## At our school:

- We have a positive school environment that provides safety, security and support for students and promotes positive relationships and wellbeing.
- We strive to build strong partnerships between the school, families and the broader community that means all members work together to ensure the safety of students.
- Teachers are encouraged to incorporate classroom management strategies that discourage bullying and promote positive behaviour.
- A range of year level incursions and programs are planned for each year to raise awareness about bullying and its impacts.
- In the classroom, our social and emotional learning curriculum teaches students what constitutes bullying and how to respond to bullying behaviour assertively. This promotes resilience, assertiveness, conflict resolution and problem solving.
- The SWPBS and RRR frameworks encourages positive relationships between students in different year levels. We seek to empower students to be confident communicators and to resolve conflict in a non-aggressive and constructive way.
- Students are encouraged to look out for each other and to talk to teachers and older peers about any bullying they have experienced or witnessed.

## Developing shared understandings:

Students will develop a consistent understanding of what constitutes bullying behaviour through the SWPBS, FS and RR. The types of bullying and roles people can play in bullying will also be addressed, as will the process for students to report all incidents of bullying.

Friendly Schools unpacks bullying through a well-being lens, with students focusing on skills such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship building, and social decision making. It is a whole school intervention that increases connectedness, sense of safety and help seeking. At a whole school level FS supports teachers, students and families in improving the school climate, social and emotional self-regulation and social problem solving.

## INCIDENT RESPONSE

### Reporting

It is the role of all students, parents and staff to report incidents of bullying. Whilst reporting can be difficult, particularly for students who fear reprisal, incidents must be reported to school staff. If parents become aware of a bullying incident, they must report it to their child's teacher and/or the principal. Teachers who become aware of bullying incidents will immediately contact the principal.

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## Investigations

When notified of alleged bullying behaviour, school staff are required to:

1. record the details of the allegations in the school incident register, and/or Compass
2. inform the relevant staff person, ie Student Wellbeing Team, Assistant Principal, Principal

The principal class is responsible for investigating allegations of bullying in a timely and sensitive manner. To appropriately investigate an allegation of bullying, the school may:

- speak to the students involved in the allegations, including the victim/s, the alleged perpetrator/s and any witnesses to the incidents
- speak to the parents of the students involved
- speak to the teachers of the students involved
- take detailed notes of all discussions for future reference
- obtain written statements from all or any of the above.

All communications in the course of investigating an allegation of bullying will be managed sensitively. Investigations will be completed as quickly as possible to allow for the behaviours to be addressed in a timely manner.

The objective of completing a thorough investigation into the circumstances of alleged bullying behaviour is to determine the nature of the conduct and the students involved. A thorough understanding of the alleged bullying will inform staff about how to most effectively implement an appropriate response to that behaviour.

Serious bullying, including serious cyberbullying, is a criminal offence and may be referred to Victoria Police. For more information, see: [Brodie's Law](#).

## RESPONSES TO BULLYING BEHAVIOURS

When the school has sufficient information to understand the circumstances of the alleged bullying and the students involved, a number of strategies may be implemented to address the behaviour and support affected students in consultation with principal class.

When a bullying incident is reported, it is vital there is a consistent response from the school. Once an incident of bullying has been reported, the matter will be investigated and addressed by the classroom teacher, staff member and/or principal. This will involve mediation and conferencing with both the student targeted and the student engaged in bullying behaviour.

There are a number of factors that will be considered when determining the most appropriate response to the behaviour.

When making a decision about how to respond to bullying behaviour, Richmond West Primary School will consider:

- the age and maturity of the students involved
- the severity and frequency of the bullying, and the impact it has had on the victim student
- whether the perpetrator student or students have displayed similar behaviour before
- whether the bullying took place in a group or one-to-one context

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- whether the perpetrator demonstrates insight or remorse for their behaviour
- the alleged motive of the behaviour, including any element of provocation.

The Principal may implement all, or some of the following responses to bullying behaviours:

- Offer counselling support to the victim student or students, including referral to the Student Wellbeing Team, Student Support Services (SSS), external providers
- Offer counselling support to the perpetrator student or students, including referral to the Student Wellbeing Team, SSS, and/or external providers
- Offer counselling support to affected students, including witnesses and/or friends of the victim student, including referral to the Student Wellbeing Team, SSS, external provider
- Facilitate a meeting with all or some of the students involved. The objective being to repair relationships that have been damaged by bringing about a sense of remorse and restorative action on the part of the person who has bullied someone and forgiveness by the person who has been bullied.
- Facilitate a mediation between some or all of the students involved to help to encourage students to take responsibility for their behaviour and explore underlying reasons for conflict or grievance.
- Implement disciplinary consequences for the perpetrator students, which may include removal of privileges, detention, suspension and/or expulsion consistent with our Student Wellbeing and Engagement policy, the Ministerial Order on Suspensions and Expulsions and any other relevant Department policy.
- Facilitate a Student Support Group meeting and/or Behaviour Support Plan for affected students.
- Prepare a Safety Plan or Individual Management Plan restricting contact between victim and perpetrator students.
- Provide discussion and/or mentoring for different social and emotional learning competencies of the students involved, including SWPBS strategies
- Monitor the behaviour of the students involved for an appropriate time and take follow up action if necessary.
- Implement targeted strategies to reinforce positive behaviours, for example year group strategies

Richmond West Primary School staff and the principal are responsible for maintaining up to date records of the investigation of and responses to bullying behaviour.

Richmond West Primary School understands the importance of monitoring the progress of students who have been involved in or affected by bullying behaviour.

Our ability to effectively reduce and eliminate bullying behaviour is greatly affected by students reporting concerning behaviour as soon as possible, so that the responses implemented by Richmond West Primary School are timely and appropriate in the circumstances.

## COMMUNICATION

This policy may be communicated to our school community in the following ways:

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- Available publicly on our school's website and communication platform
- Included in staff induction processes
- Included in our staff handbook/manual
- Discussed at staff briefings/meetings as required
- Discussed at parent information sessions
- Included in transition and enrolment packs
- Included as a regular reference in school newsletter
- Discussed at student forums and through SWPBS and RR
- Made available in hard copy from school administration upon request

## FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Camps and Excursions Policy
- Complaints and Concerns Policy
- Code of Conduct Policy
- Critical Incident and Accident Reporting Policy
- Digital Learning Policy
- Duty of Care Policy
- Student Engagement and Wellbeing Policy
- Statement of Values and School Philosophy

## RESOURCES

The following websites and resources provide useful information on prevention and responding to bullying, as well as supporting students who have been the target of bullying behaviours:

- [Australian Student Wellbeing Framework](#)
- [Bully Stoppers](#)
- [Friendly Schools](#)
- [Bullying, No Way!](#)
- [Respectful Relationships](#)
- [Safe Schools](#)
- [School Wide Positive Behaviour Support](#)
- [Student Wellbeing Hub](#)

There are additional supports available to students involved in bullying incidents, such as the Kid's Helpline phone counselling service - ph.1800 55 1800

If parents are concerned or have complaints regarding the school's anti-bullying processes, they may contact the principal, then if required the Department of Education and Training

## EVALUATION

This policy will be reviewed every 2 years, or earlier as required following an incident or analysis of new research or school data relating to bullying, to ensure that the policy remains up to date, practical and effective.

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Data will be collected through:

- discussion and consultation with students and parent/carers
- regular student bullying surveys
- assessment of other school-based data, including the number of reported incidents of bullying in each year group and the effectiveness of the responses implemented
- Attitudes to School Survey
- Parent Opinion Survey

Proposed amendments to this policy will be discussed and include consultation (where applicable) i.e. student representative groups, parent groups, school council.

## POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	September 2024
Approved by	Principal
Consultation	Consultation with school leadership and School Council September 2024
Next scheduled review date	September 2026